

Abroad

Moscow

Sweepstakes

Jockeying for position to become Leonid Brezhnev's successor as the ruler of Russia goes on at full speed. Andrei Kirilenko had been tagged as the "sure" candidate to take over from Brezhnev, even though the two men are the same age, 75. However, Kirilenko's own health is said to have deteriorated severely in the past few months. His public appearances have become rare. And recently he failed to sign the obituary in *Pravda* of a regional Communist Party official, the only one of the 13 members of the Politburo—of which he is the senior member—not to do so. As he wanes, so wax the fortunes of two new rivals for the throne of Lenin, Konstantin Chernenko and Yuri Andropov. Chernenko is a member of Brezhnev's personal cabinet and would represent continuity in the government. But Andropov, who is only 68, is drawing ahead in the betting. He resigned as chief of the secret police (KGB) last May to enter the Party secretariat. He would probably be a tough boss because of his KGB background, observers think, while as an admirer of the Hungarian "experiment," he would initiate more rational economic leadership. The world will know more after November 7, when the Soviet hierarchy assembles above Lenin's tomb for the traditional military parade in Red Square. Often an important source of power information in the past, this extraordinary lineup may continue to indicate the evolution of power in Moscow as clearly as anything else.

Brussels

And Now Electronics

Following the invasion of Western European markets by Japanese automobiles, Japanese electronic products are now hammering at the Common Market's gates. Leading manufacturers, especially in Germany, fear that the Japanese have purposely increased their output of television sets and video recorders in order to infiltrate their preserves. The fear is that if the Japanese capture a major part of the entertainment electronics field, which in Europe accounts for up to half of all microelectronic production, then some day Europe may no longer have any microelectronic industry whatever. The natural answer is for European producers to forgo nationalistic rivalry and band together to capitalize on their quality and know-how in resisting the Japanese. But here they run the risk of breaching the Community's strict anti-cartel regulations. One solution might be to set up a joint international company to handle research and development, and service and repair operations. So far the Common Market's Commission seems responsive to the idea.

Assisi

Sliding

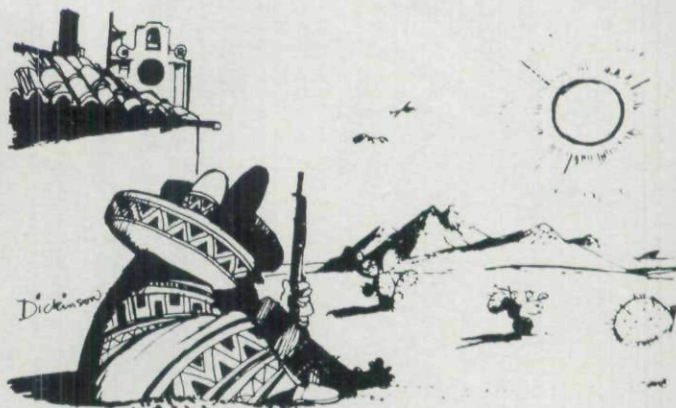
Part of the hillside on which this ancient and renowned city, the birthplace of St. Francis, is built is slipping into the valley below. A number of buildings, including a recently completed hospital, are being threatened with slow destruction. This has provoked a noisy row over the question, Which local authorities are to blame?—even though, as everyone points out, none of the famous churches of Assisi are at present

menaced. Twenty-five years ago, geological experts urgently recommended that studies of the landslide danger be made, but there was no money for this at the time and nothing was ever done. Why was the hospital built on a site known to be unsafe? Well, its construction was begun twenty years ago under another town council, and the present one is therefore not at fault. Moreover, it appears that the hospital, finished two years ago, has built-in anti-landslide safeguards. Assisi's mayor is optimistic. "In three or four months," he predicts, "we hope to master the problem. But," he adds darkly, "there are political maneuvers behind this thing. Someone wants to besmirch the image of Assisi at the height of its fame—just as we are celebrating the eight-hundredth anniversary of the birth of St. Francis." Nevertheless, the downward movement of the hillside continues slowly, and some townspeople say it is already too late to stop it.

Louvain

On ne parle pas français

For years now, the French language has been losing ground as a medium of scientific communication both at home and abroad—to English. Not only has English dominated international scientific gatherings and established itself as the means of written communication among scientific communities the world over, but French and other Francophone scientists, in order to make themselves heard at all, have had to express themselves in English in both speaking and writing, much to their chagrin. This circumstance has been repeatedly deplored by French scientific authorities, but to little avail. Recently, a conference was held in this high-place of French culture, in the French-speaking part of Belgium, to consider how such a situation could be corrected or at least ameliorated. One factor is that French scientific research, while of excellent quality, is necessarily physically limited. But the opinion was also frequently expressed that the use of the French language involved a certain degree of narcissism. "We study how many times the word 'passion' appears in the texts of Racine," expostulated French government scientist Bruno de Bessé, "but we have not yet drawn up a list of words considered indispensable to computer technologists." And a scientist from Quebec offered the thought that "It might be a good idea to invent a French scientific language, simplified and abridged. The love of phrases and complications seems to be a consubstantial sin of the French language."



Dickinson, Punch

Rothco

"We could hold up the bank and take the money—then the IMF will have to send more money, so we hold up the bank and take the money . . ."

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